

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-09

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CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3503

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJ: SOCIALISTS MAY FIND CAMPAIGN TRAIL SLIPPERY

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION BANGKOK FEB 14 FM UDORN
RPTD FOR YOUR INFO:

UDORN 498

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJECT: SOCIALISTS MAY FIND CAMPAIGN TRAIL SLIPPERY

1. ACCORDING TO UBON MP SUTHAT NGEONMON OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND (SPT), SOCIALISTS WILL HAVE A MORE DIFFICULT TIME BEING ELECTED THIS TIME AROUND. MANY ARE BEING CALLED UPON TO EXPLAIN THEIR POSITION ON THE THAI-LAO BORDER DISPUTE TO ESTABLISH THE FACT THAT THEY PLAYED NO ROLE IN INSTIGATING THAT OR OTHER INCIDENTS. THIS, COUPLED WITH LACK OF FUNDS AND UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE LONGEVITY OF WHATEVER GOVERNMENT EMERGES HAS CAUSED SEVERAL SOCIALIST MPS, AMONG THEM KHAISANG SUKSAI OF NKP, TO DECIDE NOT TO RUN IN THE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 4.

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2. SUTHAT ESTIMATED THE SPT WOULD FIELD ABOUT 130 CANDIDATES NATIONWIDE AND THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY THAT MORE THAN 10 PCT WOULD BE ELECTED. HE SAID SOCIALIST LEADERS COL. SOMKHIT SRISANGKHOM, UDORN, AND KLAEW NORAPATI, KHON KAEN, WERE ALREADY BEING CALLED COMMUNISTS BY THEIR OPPONENTS. SUTHAT THOUGHT BOTH MEN WOULD WIN, BUT FACED TOUGH RACES.

3. SUTHAT SAID THE MAIN ISSUES FOR THE SOCIALISTS WOULD BE THE "FAILURE" OF THE GOVERNMENT'S GUARANTEED PADDY PRICE AND THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN TROOPS IN THAILAND DESPITE THE PLEDGE THAT THEY WOULD BE GONE BY MARCH 20, 1976.

4. COMMENT: SUTHAT, ONLY 28, IS WIDELY RESPECTED AMONG SOCIALISTS IN THE NORTHEAST AND WAS VERY CANDID IN DEPICTING THE DIFFICULTIES HIS PARTY FACES. HE WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE GOVERNMENT'S CYNICAL MISREPRESENTATION OF THE GUARANTEED PADDY PRICE SCHEME. THIS CRITICISM COULD HAVE SOME APPEAL IN THE NORTHEAST. ON THE FOREIGN TROOPS ISSUE, SUTHAT DID NOT THINK MUCH OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN "COMBAT TROOPS" AND ADVISORS. THE SPT PLANS TO TRY TO HOLD THE GOVERNMENT TO ITS ORIGINAL STATEMENT WHICH SUTHAT SAID REFERS TO ALL FOREIGN TROOPS LEAVING BY THE END OF MARCH. HAMILTON WHITEHOUSE

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